

Physical and Mental Health of Young Adult High School Leavers, Tennessee, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Needs Assessment Survey, 1993

Sociodemographic Differences Between Young Adult School Leavers and Stayers

- Young school leavers are adults aged 18-34 who left high school before graduating or receiving a diploma or GED.¹⁸ School leavers had, on average, about 4 years less schooling than others their age. Young adult school leavers had completed an average of about 9.8 years of schooling, while the average educational attainment for comparable stayers was 13.6 years.
- Young school leavers were much more likely to be poor than stayers. One-third of school leavers were poor (i.e. came from households with annual incomes of \$10,000 or less) compared to 12% of stayers. The former lived in households with average annual incomes of \$18,535 compared to \$31,442 among stayers.
- A higher percentage of school leavers (30%) were unemployed in the past 12 months compared to their counterparts (12%), while more school leavers who were employed had part-time employment (24% of the former versus 19% of the latter).
- Young school leavers were much more likely than stayers to reside in nonmetropolitan regions of Tennessee (80% compared to 61% of stayers). This suggests the importance for public health of increased educational and employment opportunities among young school leavers in nonmetropolitan counties of Tennessee.
- School leavers were no more likely to be married than stayers, but they were more likely to live in households with children and youth under the age of 18 than their counterparts who remained in school (68% of the former and 56% lived in such households).

Comparison of Health Status, Utilization and Access to Care by Leaver Status

- Young school leavers were much more likely to rate their health as fair or poor (19%) than stayers (6.5%). The former (14%) were also more likely to report disability or functional impairment than stayers (5%). The combined percentage of young adults either ill or disabled was 24% of school leavers and 9% of stayers, a three-fold difference.

¹⁸School leavers composed 22% of the adult sample and 13% of young adults ages 18 through 34 from the Tennessee Alcohol and Other Drug Needs Assessment Survey, 1993.